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Some Surprises Revealed by Two-Year U.S. Employee Attitude Study

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Federal Column

What may have been the most comprehensive surveys in recent years of federal employee attitudes toward their jobs were conducted in 1974 for the Civil Service Commission — but with the results only recently made public.

The surveys covered 8,000 workers in five agencies. And some of responses were surprising, to say the least.

Typical questions — some expressed in statement form — and typical answers, with some minority views deleted:

"The better my performance, the better will be my opportunity for an award (incentive award, outstanding performance rating, etc.)." Forty-nine percent of all employees disagreed; only 32 percent agreed.

"The better my performance, the better will be opportunity for promotion to a higher-level job." Almost 56 percent disagreed as against 26 percent agreeing.

"I AGREE WITH the last performance rating I received from my supervisor." Roughly 49 percent said they did agree; only 22 percent didn't.

"You get criticized much more quickly for poor performance than you get praised for good performance." Sixty-five percent agreed.

"How do you feel about the performance evaluation procedure?" Thirty-eight percent thought it should be retained; 38 percent thought it should be changed; and 23 percent thought it should be eliminated.

"How would you rate your pay, considering your duties and responsibilities?" Thirty percent rated it good to very good; 32 percent "so-so" and 38 percent rated it poor or very poor.

"How would you rate your pay considering what you could get for the same kind of work in private industry?" Thirty-nine percent rated it good or very good; 30 percent "so-so" and 31 percent rated it poor-very poor.

"I am satisfied with my opportunity to earn more money on my present job." Forty percent agreed; 41 percent disagreed.

"HOW WOULD YOU rate your opportunity to move into a better job in your bureau?" Nineteen percent rated opportunity very good or good; 58 percent rated it poor or very poor.

"How would you rate your bureau's fairness in selecting employees for promotion to higher level jobs?" Seventeen percent rated it very good-good; 56 percent rated it poor-very poor.

"I am satisfied with my advancement to better jobs since starting to work in this bureau." Thirty-three percent said they were; 57 percent said they weren't.

"I would very much like to move into a supervisory position (if you already are a supervisor, think of a higher management job)." Forty-eight percent wanted to move; 31 percent didn't.

"I would like very much to move into a higher-level non-supervisory position." Here 79 percent agreed.

"I agree with the last promotion appraisal I received." Forty percent said they did; 23 percent said they didn't.

"OVER-ALL, WHAT do you think is the effect of the incentive and awards program on employee performance?" Twenty-five percent thought it raised performance "a great deal"; 26 percent thought it helped "a little"; 40 percent thought it had no impact.

"Over-all, what do you think is the effect of the incentive and award program on employee morale?" Twenty-eight percent thought it raises morale "a great deal"; 26 percent thought it helped "a little"; Twenty-six percent thought it had no impact; 20 percent thought it lowered morale.

"Fairness in deciding which employees will receive

awards (outstanding ratings, etc.)." Only 20 percent thought it very good-good; 56 percent thought it poor-very poor.

"How do you like your job — the kind of work you do?" Twenty-eight percent called their jobs "very good"; 34 percent "good"; 26 percent average; only 12 percent poor-very poor.

"My job gives me a feeling of worthwhile accomplishment." Fifty-two percent answered in the affirmative; only 26 percent in the negative.

"My job is graded at the proper level." Thirty-one percent agreed; 55 percent disagreed.

"ALL IN ALL, how much trust and confidence do you have for your immediate supervisor?" Twenty-four percent answered "a great deal"; 27 percent "quite a bit"; 22 percent "some"; 12 percent "a little"; and 15 percent "very little or none."

"My immediate supervisor is competent technically (knows the job)." Fifty-five percent agreed; 21 percent disagreed.

"My immediate supervisor is competent in 'human relations' (dealing with people)." Fifty-five percent agreed; 25 percent disagreed.

"It is difficult to get fired here." Fifty-three percent agreed; only 15 percent disagreed.

"There is a great deal of favoritism." Fifty-seven percent agreed; only 15 percent disagreed.